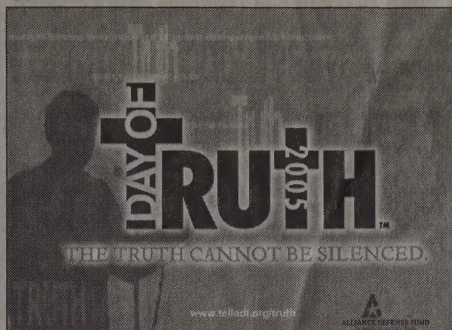
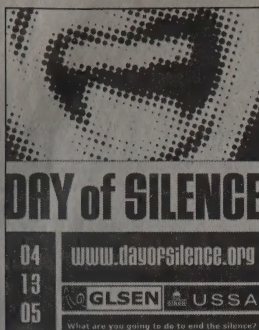




LEFT: The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network's logo for today's "Day of Silence."
RIGHT: The Alliance Defense Fund's logo for the "Day of Truth" on Thursday.

PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Anti-gay, pro-gay days

'Day of Truth' launches counter to 'Day of Silence'

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK • Irked by the success of the nationwide Day of Silence, which seeks to combat anti-gay bias in schools, conservative activists are launching a counterevent this week called the Day of Truth aimed at mobilizing students who believe homosexuality is sinful.

Participating students are being offered T-shirts with the slogan "The Truth Cannot be Silenced" and cards to pass out to classmates Thursday, the day after the Day of Si-

MORE ONLINE
Day of Silence: www.dayofsilence.org/
Day of Truth: www.telladf.org/truth/

lence to declare their unwillingness to condone "detrimental personal and social behavior."

The driving force behind the Day of Truth is the Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian legal group that has opposed same-sex marriage and challenged restrictions on religious expression in public schools. The event is endorsed by several influential conservative organizations, including Colorado Springs-based Christian ministry Focus on the Family and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

The Day of Silence began on a small scale in 1996 and is now observed by tens of thousands of students annually at hundreds of schools and colleges across the country. Most Day of Silence participants go through the school day without speaking — a tactic for drawing attention to the isolation and harassment experienced by many gay students.

Since 2001, Day of Silence observances have been coordinated by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, a New York-based group that also has worked to support gay-straight alliances at high schools across the country.

According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 84 percent of gay and lesbian high school students experience verbal harassment regularly at school, and 40 percent experience physical harassment.

Underlying the dueling events is a fundamental disagreement over the rationale for the Day of Silence.

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network and its allies say the silent protest is specifically targeting harassment of gay students, while the Alliance Defense Fund and other conservatives say the network's agenda is to broaden national acceptance of homosexuality.

The Alliance Defense Fund is anticipating that some students who try to participate in the Day of Truth may be admonished by school staff. Its resource kit includes a hotline number, with attorneys on call to provide legal advice about free-speech rights on school grounds.

Local youths will observe silence

THE GAZETTE

Teenagers who attend the Inside/Out Youth Services center in downtown Colorado Springs plan to hand out cards at their high schools today explaining why they're silent.

Although the center isn't directly participating in the nationwide Day of Silence, which aims to combat anti-gay bias in schools, it announced the event to its 300 members.

The center is an organization that provides services to

gays, lesbians, transsexual people and those who question their sexuality. Some students purchased T-shirts that state their beliefs, Executive Director Tasha Hill said.

Some high school students who have friends or family members who are gay, and people who are supportive of gay rights, will also be silent for the day, Hill said.

"Many administrators assume there are no gay people in their schools," she said. "By being silent, they're giving themselves a voice."

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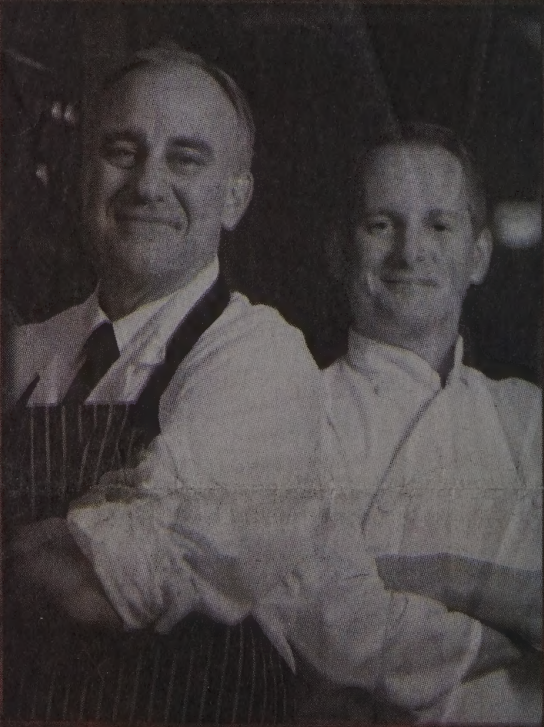
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